

## Message Text

CONFIDENTIAL

PAGE 01 RABAT 03888 161202Z  
ACTION SS-25

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 SSO-00 /026 W  
-----088009 161221Z /46

P R 161130Z JUL 77  
FM AMEMBASSY RABAT  
TO SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 2526  
INFO AMEMBASSY ALGIERS  
AMEMBASSY NOUAKCHOTT  
USMISSION USUN NEW YORK

C O N F I D E N T I A L RABAT 3888

EXDIS

E. O. 11652: GDS  
TAGS: SHUM, PBOR, MO, US, AG, XI  
SUBJ: ALGERIAN EXPLOITATION OF HUMAN RIGHTS ISSUE WITH RESPECT TO  
SAHARA

REF: ALGIERS 1751, 1752

1. REFTELS INDICATE THAT ALGERIANS ARE ONCE AGAIN TRYING TO ENGAGE THIRD PARTIES ON THEIR BEHALF IN SAHARA DISPUTE, THIS TIME THE U.S. THROUGH AN ATTEMPT TO DEPICT THIS THORNY PROBLEM AS A HUMAN RIGHTS ISSUE. ALGERIAN DESIRE FOR OUR "SECRET DIPLOMACY" AND MEDIATION FOLLOWS ATTEMPT TO MOBILIZE WALDHEIM ALONG SAME LINES (STATE 141679, RABAT 3429).

2. WE BELIEVE SAME BASIC CONSIDERATIONS AS OUTLINED IN RABAT 2790 CONCERNING WALDHEIM INITIATIVE APPLY IN THIS NEW CASE. WE CONTINUE TO URGE EXTREME CAUTION REGARDING ALGERIAN DIPLOMATIC MANEUVERING, INASMUCH AS OUR POLICY OF NEUTRALITY ON THE SUBSTANCE OF THE SAHARA DISPUTE HAS SERVED US WELL IN AVOIDING GREAT POWER INVOLVEMENT IN THIS ESSENTIALLY REGIONAL DISPUTE AND IN PRESERVING BILATERAL RELATIONSHIPS WITH THE PARTIES.

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3. IF HUMAN RIGHTS ARE INVOLVED IN THE SAHARA QUESTION, IT WOULD BE THE SAHARAN REFUGEE PROBLEM, AN ESPECIALLY PRICKLY ASPECT OF THE DISPUTE. BOTH SIDES HAVE DEVELOPED A RIGID LITURGY. MOROCCAN SENSITIVITY REMAINS HIGH (SEE RABAT 3039 AND 2399), WITH GOM CLAIMING THAT ALGERIA DETAINS THESE REFUGEES AGAINST THEIR WILL AND PRESSING FOR THEIR REPATRIATION TO SAHARA HOMELAND. GOM ALSO VIEWS ANY ASSISTANCE TO THESE REFUGEES AS SUPPORT FOR THE

ALGERIAN-BACKED POLISARIO GUERRILLA WAR IN THE SAHARA.

4. ALGERIAN STRESS ON SAHARAN SELF-DETERMINATION, ANOTHER CONTENTIOUS AND COMPLEX ISSUE ON WHICH WE HAVE CAREFULLY AVOIDED TAKING SIDES, IS INTERPRETED BY MOROCCANS AS CYNICAL AND SELF-SERVING. THEY POINT OUT THAT KING HASSAN'S PUBLIC OFFER OF A NEW CONSULTATION OF THE SAHARAN POPULATION, CONDITONED ON (A) CESSATION OF ALGERIAN-SPONSORED GUERRILLA WARFARE AND (B) PROVISION BY SPAIN OF 1974 CENSUS RECORDS, HAS NOT BEEN ACCEPTED BY ALGERIANS. MEANWHILE, GOM CONSIDERS JUNE PARLIAMENTARY ELECTIONS, ALSO CONDUCTED IN THE SAHARA PROVINCES, AS ONE MORE CONCRETE CONSULTATION OF THE SAHARANS. AT THE SAME TIME, MOROCCANS CONTINUE TO STRESS THAT THEY ARE OPEN TO ANY AND ALL MEDIATION EFFORTS, DESPITE WHAT THEY CHARACTERIZE AS CONSISTENT ALGERIAN REJECTIONS. LATEST ABORTIVE MEDIATION, BY GUINEA, DURING WHICH KING HASSAN REPORTEDLY ACCEPTED PRINCIPLE OF SELF-DETERMINATION, SAID TO HAVE MET SAME FATE AT ALGERIAN HANDS (RABAT 3852 NOTAL).

5. IN SUM, WE DETECT NO POTENTIAL BENEFIT FOR THE U.S. IN BECOMING CAUGHT UP IN UNCEASING AND EMOTION-CHARGED ALGERIAN-MOROCCAN SQUABBLING AND CONSIDER ALGERIA'S IMPUTING A HUMAN RIGHTS OBLIGATION TO US AS SPECIOUS AND DANGEROUS.  
ANDERSON

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## Message Attributes

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**Review Markings:**  
Margaret P. Grafeld  
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